

## **KET presents: *In Their Own Words: Kentucky Veterans of the Korean War***

Former soldiers from the Commonwealth tell their stories of fighting in Korea in the KET documentary *In Their Own Words: Kentucky Veterans of the Korean War*, premiering Sunday, Nov. 10 at 2/1 p.m. on KET and Monday, Nov. 11 at 9:30/8:30 p.m. on KET2.

"There is lot of emotion when these guys are retelling their battle experiences," said KET producer Tom Bickel, who also produced the 2007 documentary *Kentucky WWII Veterans: In Their Own Words*. "There are some tears — and some humor."

In the program, Richard Zapata, a Marine from Louisville, tells the story of his beach landing.

"Someone fires off a flare and we're going full-bore for the beach and it's like a race," Zapata remembered. "In the meantime, you've got all these shells flying over — rockets are flying, shells are coming back the other way. And it's really hard to keep your head down and not watch it! I know, that sounds silly — but it's like watching the movies!"

In one of the program's most serious moments, Ernest West of Wurtland, the only surviving Kentucky recipient of the Medal of Honor, retells the story of how, again and again, he went back to save wounded members of his squad who'd been injured by enemy grenades on Heartbreak Ridge.

"I took the point, the point man ... and I hit my rifle twice with my knuckles and he crawled up to me and said, 'What's wrong?' and I said, 'They're sitting up there waiting on us, George,'" said West, who'd been chosen for the assignment that night by his lieutenant specifically because of his abilities — and his cool head.

The horrors of war can lead to close friendships — even friendships that take more than five decades to rekindle. Jack Armacost of Lexington was wounded in battle, just moments after he tried to save a wounded friend. He was taken to safety in an unlikely place — beneath a tank, where the wounded would await transport to a MASH unit.

There, under the tank, Armacost was cared for by the tank commander, a man he

wouldn't see again until 2007, when Hervey Hilien walked into Lexington's VFW Post for Korean War veterans.

"He asked if he could join, and I said, 'Sure,'" said Armacost. "I started reviewing his [paperwork] and I said 'you were covering what?' And he said '24th Division, 19th Regiment Able, Baker, Charlie, and George Companies.' And I said, 'That's what I was in!' And he said, 'Yeah. I know!'" After that the two became close friends, for nearly seven years until Hilien's recent death.

The film also explores how Kentucky soldiers in Korea couldn't have been more proud of a very special participant in the war effort who went by the name of Sergeant Reckless — a Thoroughbred mare who earned her stripes on the battlefield, packing supplies and munitions up the steep hills to the Marines.

"Reckless was a beautiful little animal," said Paul Hammersley of Bowling Green. Trained to avoid the hazards of war, Reckless only had to be led up a mountain by her trainer three times before she was able to make the journey 51 times alone.

"They would load the little mare up with her six or seven canisters and send her up the mountain, under heavy fire the whole time," Hammersley said. "She knew when to duck enemy fire, she knew how to hide in little alcoves and get out of the ways of shells until she made it."

***In Their Own Words: Kentucky Veterans of the Korean War*** is a KET production and is produced by Tom Bickel.

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